

The Green Scene



With Earth Day coming up, REC is highlighting a few ways you can make a difference this year.



RECNEWS

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The Future is Electric

By Dr. Peter Muhoro

REC's vice president of strategy and technology



I recently became an electric vehicle driver, and that has only confirmed my excitement about electric vehicles. I know people have important questions and concerns about electric vehicles, so I want to provide some answers.

Range anxiety

It's common for people to worry about running out of electric range, but it is similar to watching your gas tank in a traditional car. Driving range on a single charge is increasing each year, and it's easier than ever to find electric vehicle chargers at service stations and public places.

Some electric vehicles — and many apps — offer the ability to easily locate a charging station near your home or on your travel route.

So let's look at the different kinds of chargers.

A Level 1 charger, similar to the outlet in your home, is less common. While it will charge your electric vehicle just fine, it is slow so it will take the longest amount of time, usually just gaining 2-5 miles per hour of charge.

A Level 2 charger is more standard for people to have at home. You will be able to charge an electric vehicle overnight easily with a Level 2 charger. Imagine having your own "gas station" at home! You can add nearly 25 miles every hour you charge.

Level 3 is also called a DC Fast Charger. You will find these at the "new type of gas station."

The economics of owning an EV

To charge my electric vehicle on a DC Fast Charger, depending on the location and electric rates, I can pay about \$3.80 to charge about 110 miles, in less than 15 minutes or so. When I think about how many miles per gallon I get, it's pretty impressive. On average, I am paying about one-fourth of what I used to pay at the gasoline pump for a "full tank."

Low maintenance

Another benefit is that I don't have any oil changes to worry about. So my vehicle maintenance becomes very limited to things such as tires, brakes and, of course, electronic components. Electric vehicles are also good for the environment. They reduce emissions from vehicles, improve air quality and reduce your carbon footprint. Look at the options and find one that is right for you!

Learn More: myrec.coop/PowerYourDrive



Plant Your Way to Energy Savings

Spring can be a perfect time to plant new shrubs and trees around your home. But did you know the decisions you make about what to plant and where to plant it can actually affect your electric bill?

We checked in with Cindy Musick, REC's director of vegetation management, who shared a few planting pointers. Here's what she had to say:

If our planting goal is energy savings, what do you recommend?

I would say to start with trees and plants native to Virginia and strategically place those on the south side of your home. You need to provide shade in the summertime and sun in the wintertime. So when the trees drop their leaves, you can absorb the sun rays to heat your home and block those same sun rays in the spring and summer.

I've heard about "tree canopies" but how exactly do those work?

You might even want to work with your neighbors in some cases. If you can increase the tree canopy on your property — and on adjacent properties — then you can collectively reduce a heat-island effect if you have a lot of concrete or a driveway or a road near your property.

What kinds of trees do you recommend?

Some native Virginia trees to consider include maples, oaks, witch hazel and redbuds. As an added bonus, mature trees around your house can help with another kind of green: They have been known to add as much as 15% to a home's value!

How much can we really save through smart landscaping?

Strategically positioned trees can save up to 25% of a household's energy consumption for heating and cooling. Shading an airconditioning unit can increase its efficiency by up to 10%.

Cooperative Sunshare: 'It's Just Nice to Have that Option'

Jill Mayhew of Montpelier in Hanover County knew she wanted to support solar power at her home, but faced a dilemma.

"We had been interested in solar energy, but wouldn't be able to put panels up at our home," she said. "There just wasn't a good location that would get the best sun."

So when she got word of an REC program called Cooperative Sunshare about a year and a half ago, she was definitely interested. Through Cooperative Sunshare, REC member-owners can sign up to purchase blocks of solar power.

HOW IT WORKS:

- » Sign up online.
- » Pay a small monthly fee.
- » That's it!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT:

- » Upfront setup expenses.
- » Maintenance fees.
- » Repair costs.
- » Visits to your home.



"We knew it was a little bit more expensive, but we wanted to support those renewable energy sources. I thought it was important to show the electric cooperative that there are people interested. It's just nice to have that option."

- Jill Mayhew

Sign Up Today: myrec.coop/sunshare